Director's Awards for Natural Resource Stewardship
2005 Winners

Trish Patterson Student Conservation Association Award for Natural Resource Management in a Small Park

Award Winner: Jason Lott, Integrated Resources Program Manager
Lyndon B. Johnson, National Historical Park

As the only resource management staff member and first incumbent in the newly described Integrated Resources Program Manager, Jason has oversight and responsibility for numerous projects and programs. These duties have required his taking a broad perspective to consider all of the park's natural resources and simultaneously consider the effects of proposed management actions on the park's natural and cultural resources. Jason has accomplished this with zeal and diligence; the energy he brings to the job, his proposal-writing skills and his desire to accurately document the park's resources and projects have combined to structure a very effective resources management program that will serve the park well now and in the future

Jason's success in networking with other resource professionals has resulted in improvements in the park's natural resource management program which would not have been possible without his efforts. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the effort to restore agriculturally-disturbed land to native mixed-grass prairie in the Johnson Settlement, and in the stewardship of the water resources in the reach of the Pedernales River at the LBJ Ranch. The partners and contributions that Jason has attracted for these projects are the fruits of his enthusiasm and hard work, providing clear evidence of his natural leadership capabilities.

Jason has taken the park's vision for this prairie restoration, which will enhance the visitor understanding of the 1850s settlement of the Johnson brothers in this area, and has focused it into a realistic certainty. This management plan was a byproduct of a continuing partnership fostered by Jason with the Wildflower Center. Jason's contribution to this research has been the application of the treatments on thirty vegetation plots for the past two years as specified in the research design. These treatments included mechanical reduction, herbicide applications and fire, with different combinations conducted during the different seasons. Jason was able to negotiate assistance from Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge to conduct the fire treatments. Results from this research were used for the development of the Prairie Restoration Management Plan and will be incorporated into planned fuels treatment projects for this fire management unit.

Director's Excellence in Natural Resource Stewardship through Maintenance

Award Winner: Bruce Hancock, Chief of Maintenance
Whitman Mission National Historic Site

Bruce Hancock arrived at Whitman Mission National Historic Site in 1992 and assumed the duties of Chief of Maintenance for the first time in his career. He made the transition from the hands-on-job of a maintenance worker that supported park operations with wrenches and saws to Chief of Maintenance, administering park operations through budgets and planning. The new job required new skills and a different mind set. The results he has produced have been most beneficial to park resources.

Mr. Hancock's familiarity, experience, and knowledge with day-to-day maintenance operations has been an asset. His ability to analyze operational issues, develop alternatives, and make sound management recommendations have proven invaluable in developing an efficient and effective maintenance operation. His contributions have served outside the tradition organizational boundaries by participating in visitor services, resource management, and administration. He has served as the primary author, planning team leader, and team member on numerous planning efforts: Energy conservations, General Management Plan, Environmental Management System, Safety Plan and the Hearing Conservation Plan are a few of the plans and programs he has made significant contributions to. However, he has truly excelled in his contributions to the management of the maintenance operations by taking a holistic view. He has opened the planning and implementation of the maintenance operations to suggestions and ideas from the entire park staff. As such the maintenance operation supports all park objectives. Although the overall program is exemplary there is one aspect of Facilities Management that distinguishes Mr. Hancock and the operation that he administers.

Mr. Hancock has fully intergraded resource stewardship into the maintenance operations at Whitman Mission National Historic Site. Through his leadership and example a stewardship philosophy has been accepted by the entire maintenance staff and has far reaching implications not only for the protection of park resources but for responsible use of the resources of the planet. His accomplishments are demonstrated in a wide variety of individual projects but the real significance lies in developing and applying the philosophy of resource stewardship in daily operations. Energy conservation and management have been focal points for Mr. Hancock. Conservation measures implemented by Mr. Hancock include low energy lighting, purchasing of green energy equipment, use of bio-fuels for both heating and equipment use, solar powered lights for the parking area, and a grid tied photovoltaic system. The scale of these individual project may not generate a large footprint. However, these individual small steps when viewed collectively have produced a meaningful reduction in energy consumption and demonstrates resource stewardship at it's finest.

Director's Award for Superintendent of the Year for Natural Resource Stewardship

Award Winner: Woody Smeck, Superintendent
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

Woody Smeck, Superintendent at Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SAMO), has provided outstanding leadership and support for effective natural resource stewardship by embracing scientific inquiry, linking data and science to management decision-making, and promoting resource stewardship broadly among partner agencies and organizations at the park and the Mediterranean Coast Network. Woody's accomplishments have been especially noteworthy over the last year, as numerous major park issues and initiatives emerged that were addressed through innovative and cutting-edge use of natural resource science to promote effective resource stewardship. Notable examples include, but are not limited to, completion of the park's Fire Management Plan, development of a resource-driven Trail Management Plan, support of regional conservation efforts linking park stewardship objectives to interagency planning, and network leadership in the implementation of a Vital Signs Monitoring Program and Research Learning Center. The success of these and many other programs have been due to the steady leadership, continual support and encouragement, and effective interagency communication and partnerships fostered by Woody's role as superintendent.

Although the focus of this award nomination is on accomplishments achieved in FY 2005, Woody's efforts and success have been ongoing for many years. The achievements highlighted here are truly reflections of multi-year efforts to forge partnerships, dig deep into issues, and combine multiple interests to find innovative and effective solutions to natural resource stewardship challenges. The foundation developed by Woody, through continual encouragement, support, and leadership provided to SAMO staff and partners, has instilled an attitude of success and enthusiasm in support of natural resource science and stewardship. This culture and attitude has had immeasurable positive effects on the long-term stewardship of natural resources at SAMO, network parks, and surrounding areas.

Director's Award for Natural Resource Research

Award Winner: Charles Schwartz, Leader, Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team, USGS-BRD Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center

Since 1998, Dr. Charles (Chuck) Schwartz has led the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team (IGBST) which, beginning in 1973, has been responsible for centralized research and monitoring of the greater Yellowstone ecosystem's grizzly bear population. The team serves as a worldwide model for long-term science accomplished by an interagency group who regularly encounter high levels of interest and scrutiny from public constituents and policy makers.

Dr. Schwartz is a recognized expert in both bears and wolves, having been invited to participate in reviewing, designing, and conducting research projects around the world. Under his leadership, the IGBST provided credible scientific information used by an interagency team to complete the 2003 *Conservation Strategy for the Grizzly Bear in the Yellowstone Ecosystem.* The scientific team also produced reliable technical publications and reports on the growth, in numbers and distribution, of Yellowstone grizzlies. This culminated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's November 2005 proposal to establish a "distinct population segment" of the grizzly bear for the greater Yellowstone ecosystem, and the associated proposal to remove the population from the threatened species list. Dr. Schwartz has made significant individual and team leadership contributions to the understanding of brown bear ecology in general and specifically to documenting the recovery of the Yellowstone grizzly bear population in such means as will likely withstand both technical and public scrutiny.

This notable achievement on behalf of federal land and wildlife managers is the capstone of a career devoted to understanding the ecology of large mammals, particularly brown or grizzly bears and moose. His research, and efforts at interpreting data and its implications for humans and wildlife, has helped numerous park managers and their staffs understand bear biology and management strategies for preserving this top carnivore. Parks that have benefited from Dr. Schwartz' research and outreach include: Grand Teton, Yellowstone, Glacier, Katmai, Kenai Fjords, Glacier Bay, Denali, and other units in Alaska and the Rocky Mountains.

Director's Award for Natural Resource Management

Award Winner: Barbara Samora, Biologist
Mount Rainier National Park

Barbara is an 18 year veteran of Mount Rainier National Park and deserves the recognition this award brings for her outstanding achievements in understanding, protecting, and managing park natural resources. She manages three main program areas; the Atmospheric Program, Aquatic Program, and the Social Science Program Barbara's familiarity and experience with park issues is invaluable to park management. Her institutional knowledge of park resource issues is unsurpassed. She has made numerous contributions as principle author, planning leader or team member on numerous planning efforts: Wilderness Management Plan (1989), Natural Resource Management Plan (1999), Strategic Plan for Mount Rainier National Park (1999), Mount Rainier National Park General Management Plan (2001), Mount Rainier National Park Monitoring Plan (2002), Mount Rainier National Park Geological Hazards Plan (2002), and Developing Visitor Enjoyment and Resource Protection (VERP) Indicators and Standards for Mount Rainier National Park (2004).

Barbara is very capable of analyzing operational issues, developing alternatives and making sound management recommendations. She clearly articulates her concerns, findings and recommendations. Barbara is a professional biologist with skills and expertise in aquatics and physical science. She has a working knowledge of the role of social science and its integration into park operations. She maintains high standards for herself and her employees. She has demonstrated her capability to integrate and interpret ecological processes and resource management actions to park managers and the public. Barbara is a highly motivated - self-directed, principled and competent individual. Barbara is conscientious and dependable. She can always be relied on to provide accuracy and analytical information on critical issues to park management in a timely manner. The park staff and her peers respect her for her interdisciplinary knowledge and dedication to the NPS and its resources.

Barbara serves on the meteorology/air quality and aquatics/water quality I&M North Coast and Cascades Network (NCCN) Technical Committee. She has been an important participant in planning and prioritizing the Network's Vital Sign program. She has been very influential in providing input into the work plans of the NCCN I&M Coordinator, PWR Fluvial Geomorphologist and PWR Air Quality Specialist. The later two positions she lobbied WRD and ARD to establish these regional positions. Barbara then wrote the position descriptions and was actively involved in hiring. Barbara has been able to initiate several new programs through both technical assistance and special funding. She has accomplished many of these critical tasks simultaneously along with her routine duties. Barbara continues to provide excellent leadership and representation for the Park, Network, Region and Service in the support of VERP, air quality, water resource, soundscapes and night sky related programs with various partners.

Professional Excellence in Natural Resources Award

Award Winner: Jeff Miller, Fisheries Biologist
South Florida/Caribbean Inventorying and Monitoring Network

Jeff has significantly contributed towards a better understanding of the coral reef resources in the South Florida/ Caribbean Inventory and Monitoring Network parks by extending coral reef ecosystem monitoring to these network parks. Jeff has led development of the SONAR-based random sample selection protocol which is used to establish long-term monitoring sites while reducing observer bias. In a recent Journal of Coral Reefs publication, this protocol was identified as being one of only three out of 119 reviewed from around the world that met rigorous sampling criteria. Jeff has dedicated his efforts to ensuring that NPS coral reef science is seen as the most rigorous in the world, avoiding shortcuts during development to ensure that the protocol meets the most specific scrutiny. Long term data collection using this method has illuminated the coral reef science community showing the power of permanent sampling transects in comparison to less rigorous and difficult methods. This power was even more evident when the highest water temperatures measured in 16 years in the USVI initiated a coral bleaching event in the Fall of 2005 which was thoroughly documented in BUIS and VIIS with existing methods. The data collected by the SFCN provided an unprecedented story of how the coral bleaching not only impacted the system, but elegantly illustrated how disease took advantage of already stressed corals, and how the decline in live coral cover decreased due to these events. Jeff took on this additional workload, 3 times more than our standard annual sampling for field data collection and lab post processing and analysis for these USVI sites. Jeff never ceases to demonstrate his can-do attitude, is highly respected by his peers, and the scientific community are pointing to his advanced methods for coral reef monitoring as the ‘right’ way to perform this challenging monitoring activity.